Acharya Abhinavagupta

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"Siva incarnate to enlighten the people"

Swami Lakshman Joo
Koshur Samachar

ABHINAVAGUPTA was one of the most outstanding Acharyas of the Shaiva philosophy. We learn from references about him in Tantraloka and Paratrimshika Vivarana that he lived in Kashmir about the end of the tenth and the beginning of eleventh centuries A.D. The earliest ancestor of Abhinavagupta was a famous Brahmin, Attrigupta, who lived in Autarvedi, the ancient name of tract of land lying between the Ganga and the Yamuna. Attrigupta, a great Shaiva teacher, was invited by King Lalitaditya, who ruled over Kashmir from 700-736 A.D. A spacious house was soon built by the orders of the king on the banks of the Jhelum (Vitasta) for Attrigupta and a big Jagir was granted to him for his maintenance. Many generations after him, one of his descendants, named Varahagupta, became a great scholar of Shaiva philosophy. His son, Narasimhagupta, alias Chukhala, father of Abhinavagupta, was also a great Shaiva teacher.

Kashmir Shaivism

Abhinavagupta was a great scholar and Shaiva teacher, who possessed knowledge in all matters relating to Kashmir Shaivism. The versatility of this genius was recognised in his own time. He was one of the best authorities on Shaiva philosophy and various branches of Sanskrit literature. The great Acharya sat at the feet of many teachers for the traditional and authoritative knowledge. Such was his humility and devotion that these teachers imparted to him all the learning they possessed. The celebrated author of Kavya Prakash, Rajanaka Mammatta calls him the Shankaracharya of Kashmir.

Yogic Powers

There are eight great Yogic powers explained in Shastras as follows:

The first is the superhuman power of becoming as small as an atom;

The second is the Yogic power of increasing the size of one's own body at will;

The third is the supernatural power of assuming excessive lightness at will;

The fourth is the superhuman power of obtaining anything desired;

The fifth is the Yogic power of attaining irresistible will;

The sixth is the superhuman power of commanding the whole world;

The seventh Yogic power is to fascinate the whole universe; and

The eighth is to possess unrestrained will viz. whatever he wills comes true.

All these eight Yogic powers were possessed by Acharya Abhinavagupta.

In Malinivijayotara Shastra six great signs of spiritual advancement are explained as follows:

The Six Signs

(1) Unswerving devotional attachment to Shiva;
(2) Full attainment of Mantra Siddhi;
(3) Attainment of controlling power over all the five elements;
(4) Capacity to accomplish the desired end;
(5) Mastery over the whole science of rhetorics and poetics; and
(6) The sudden dawning of the knowledge of all the Shastras.

These six great spiritual signs also were observed by discerning people in Abhinavagupta and in his time everybody looked upon him as Shiva incarnate.

Kashmir Shaivism is called Trika philosophy. Trika means threefold science of man and his world. This Trika contains the science of (individual), (the energy) and (the universal). The purpose of Trika is to show how an individual rises to the state of universal through energy. The Trika philosophy is classified by Abhinavagupta in four systems which are Krama system, Spanda system, Kula system and Pratyabijnya system.

Abhinavagupta says that Krama deals with space and time. He explains that actually there is no space. When one deals with forms, the space appears. When one is established in formless state of being, for him there is no space. In the same way when there is something to be done, then only the existence of time shines and when you have nothing to do, then time has no existence.

Explaining the Spanda system, Abhinavagupta says that it is that movement which actually is no movement. Spanda makes us realise that whatever is in movement actually is established in unmoved point. So although everyting seems moving actually it is not moving at all.

Science of Totality

As for the Kula system, he says that Kula means the Science of Totality. In each and every part of the universe totality shines - throughout. Take a small part of any object. In that part you will see the universal energy existing.

The Pratyabijnya system deals with the school of recognition. Abhinavagupta, while explaining this school of recognition, says;

To make it clear, at the time of God-realization nothing new is realised; on the contrary, the Yogi feels that this state of God-consciousness which he was experiencing was already known to him.

In this school of recognition, Abhinavagupta says, the state of God-consciousness is already there. He comes to the conclusion that in this universe you have to see and realise the Kingdom of God- consciousness only everywhere and nothing else.

Many works have been atributed to Abhinavagupta though only a few are extant. Some of the works of his authorship are:-

(1) Bhairavastotra; (2) Malinivijaya Vartika (3) Bharata Natya Shastra-Tika; (4) Dwanmalokalochana; (5) Natyalochana; (6) Purva-Panchika; (7) Gitarthasangraha; (8) Bodha Pancha Dashika; (9) Paramartha Charcha; (10) Dehastha Devatachakrastotra; (11) Paratrimshike Vivarana; (12) Paratrimshika Lagu Vitti; (13) Kramastotra; (14) Ishwara Pratyabijnya-Vimarshini; (15) Ishwar Pratyabijnya Vivriti Vimarshini; (16) Paramartha Sara; (17) Tantraloka; (18) Tantra Sara, etc. Besides these, he wrote many other works. Madhuraja, a devotee of Abhinavagupta, writes that:

Lord Shree-Kantha-Nath Shiva Himself appeared in Kashmir in the form of Abhinavagupta to enlighten the people. Madhuraja also asserts that Abhinavagupta was, in fact, the incarnation of Bhairava-Nath Shiva. In conclusion I would say that Abhinavagupta was the pride of Kashmir. He is even now the pride of Kashmir, as his works and teachings continue to deeply influence the discerning people.

Abhinavagupta - the Philosopher

by Prof. K. N. Dhar

ABHINAVAGUPTA has been extolled as "Mahamahesvara" by the subsequent Kashmiri authors, his disciples and admirers, which precisely means the "great devotee of Siva", or the "Supreme - Self" in Shaivistic parlance. Kashmiri tradition also is unequivocal in testifying to his versatility. He wrote on philosophy (Saiva-Darshan, commentary on Bhagvad Gita), commented upon Anandavardhan's "Dhvanayloka", Bharata's "Natya Shastra", thus epitomized in himself the diverse talents of a philosopher, rhetorician, and a critic on dramaturgy. Morever on Ksemendra's testimony, we know that he himself studied literature (Sahitya) with such a learned Guru. His command over rhetorics was so enthralling that Mammatta- the reputed author of 'Kavya Prakash' out of veneration for his erudition in the subject refers to him as " Abhinavagupta Pada ". Pada is added to the names to show great respect. Vamana the propounder of Riti school in Indian Rhetorics and commentator of 'Kavya Prakasha' known as "Bala Bodhini" bas alluded to Abhinavagupta as 'an intellectual giant and like a serpent (terror) to his young school - fellows." This all goes to prove that Abhinavagupta deserves these compliments fully as given to him by the Kashmiri tradition and literary authors as will be shown later. However, in Indian literary tradition two such names have come down to us. The first Abhinavagupta belongs to Kamarupa (Assam) and is a Sakhta- a worshipper of Shakti or Devi. The solitary reference made to him is by one Madhva in his "Shankra Digvijaya,"' who also wrote a Shanker Bashya, presumably on Badrayan's Vedanta Sutras. He was a contemporary of Sankaracharya who lived according to accepted opinion from 788 to 820 A. D. Abhinavagupta of Assam was in the first instance antagonistic to the monistic theory as preached by Sankara, but having been defeated in the Shastrartha (interpretation of the sacred lore) became his disciple. The Indologist of Dr. Aufreeht's calibre should not have made such a glaring mistake as to include. "Shaktabhashya" among the works of Abhinavagupta of Kashmir. Perhaps the prefixes "Shakhta" and "Maheshwara" make all the difference between the two and this distinction has been made clear between the two even in very early times.

Abhinavagupta being a conscious artist was not averse to biography. He has given in the colophons of his various works his genealogy and also some dates. It definitely goes to his credit and does not leave us guessing. In his

"Paratrimshika Vivarna" he explicitly pens down the name of his earliest ancestor as Atrigupta who was born in Antarvedi - the Doab between the Ganges and the Jamuna. Again in 'Tantraloka' he refers to his sterling qualities of head and heart and being captivated by these was brought to Kashmir- "The crest of Himalayas"- by King Lalitaditya The date of the reign of Lalitaditya is circa 725 - 761. He was also known as Mukhtapida and was eager for conquests.' He defeated the king of Kanauj Yasosvarman and along with the booty brought Atrigupta also to Kashmir. Abhinavagupta goes on to record "In that beautiful city (Srinagar) like that of Kubera's (Alka) in front of the temple of "Sheetanshumauli" (Siva having the moon as his crest) on the Vitasta, the king got built for him a spacious house and also granted a Jagir of land to him. There is a veritable gap of a century and a half between Atrigupta and Abhinavagupta's grand father Varahagupta. In between the two, the author has left the family tree blank for reasons best known to him. Coming direct to the Tantraloka commentary Abhinavagupta explicitly says that his father was Narasinhagupta, popularly known as Chukhulaka and his mother's name was Vimalakala.

Herein we have to refer to the observation made by late Madhusudan Kaul of the Kashmir RP search Department who in his introduction to "Ishvara Pratyabhijna" has erroneously taken Laksmana Gupta as his father. Swami Laksmana Ji also corroborates the other view that Narsimha Gupta was his father. Moreso, the direct confession of Abhinavagupta as regards his parents and their names leaves nothing to argue about. Laksmana Gupta was definitely one of the preceptors of Abhinavagupta who initiated him into the Pratyabhijna Shastra as acknowledged by him in his introduction to Ishvara Pratybhijna Vivriti Vimarshini in the words:

<*verses*>

(Sri Laksamna Gupta showed me the path to Pratyabhijna theory (recognition).

The silence of Kalhana about Abhinavagupta as such is intriguing - he mentions three "Abhinavas" in his Raja-Tarangini and the suffix "Gupta" he has not appended with any of these. The first 'Abhinava' is a "Divira" or a scribe,' the second foster - brother of Kayyamantaka in the reign of Samgramaraja and the third a Damaraj a landed - aristocrat. No where the name of Abhinavagupta appears as a scholar of repute or a Saiva; whereas he has at times referred to such names as Muktakana, Shivasvamin,

Anandavardhana and Ratnakara etc. It may be argued that our author was more after learning than after the favour of kings, hence was not attached to any court. Consequently Kalhana, whose forte being the description of kings, skips over him. However, the fame which Abhinavagupta acquired during his life time and even after could not have eluded the chronicler Kalhana. He could not ignore the powerful Kashmiri tradition. While mentioning Ananda Vardhana the name of Abhinavagupta would have been a natural corollary being his commentator. Subsequent research in this behalf might throw some light on this omission. About his date or probable years in which he lived, he has bequeathed to us some keys which if properly used, can unlock this bane of Indian date - keeping most easily. In the last verse of "Brhati Vimarsini" he states that he finished this assignment in the 90th year when 4 l 15 years of Kaliyuga had elapsed; by deducting 25 years from the Kali era. the local or Saptarsi era can be found. It works at 4090th year of the Saptarsi Calendar, and the word "Navatitame" used by him in that verse corresponds to 90th year of 4000 Kali era. Even, we at present write down only 74 when actually it is 1974 - seventy fourth year of 1900 Christian era.

Again in one of his Stotras which is called "Bhairavastava" in the last verse he gives the date and his name also:

<*verses*>

"Abhinavagupta composed this Stava (eulogy) on the 10th of dark fortnight in the month of Pausha in the year Vasu (8) Rasa (6)." (In Sanskrit the digits are read from the left), hence it comes to 68. It is definitely the 68th year of the Saptarsi Samvat 4000 as shown above. Moreover, in his Kramastotra he again refers to date as:

<*verses*>

"In the 66th year, on the ninth day of dark fornight, I, Abhinavagugta, in the month of Maghar, praised Lord Siva".

So it can safely be inferred that Abhinavagupta's literary period extended from 4066 to 4090 laukika or Saptarsi era corresponding to 990-1O15 A. D. Even though we have tried to locate the period, but at the same time we are not sure that Kramastotra is his first work. It is to be remembered in this context that Abbinavagupta having written a host of books, the chronological order of his works cannot can be arranged without any effort, but those which

have no date or have not been referred to by the subsequent authors will defeat any such solution. In this way we can safely say that "Kramastotra" might not be his first composition, it might be pushed back to two decades at least, as in the chronological order fixed by Dr. K. C Pandey this Stotra stands at No. 13. Hence we might safely assume that his literary career commenced from 970 A. D. According to his own testimony he adopted many Gurus for pursuing knowledge in different fields and even went outside Kashmir, presumably to Jalandhar to find a Guru "Shamboo Nath" there. The years of initiation after which maturity dawned on him might be taken not less than 30 years, after which, confidence was gained by him to write independently. Hence we might place his birth near about 940- A. D. He might have lived even beyond 1015 A. D. and the varacity of the tradition prevalent in Kashmir to this day, that he entered a cave while reciting the Bhairavastava alongwith 1200 disciples, and was never seen again cannot be doubted. This cave, alleged to have received the mortal frame of Abhinavagupta, is situated at "Birwa" village some five miles from Magam on the Gulmarg range.

Tke thirst for knowledge in our author was insatiable. A bevy of Gurus was adopted by him for this purpose. According to his own statement he read at the feet of :

	Subject
1. Narasimha Gupta (His father).	Grammar.
2. Vainanatha.	Dvaitadvaita Tantras.
3. Bhuti Rajatanaya.	Daulistic Saivism
4. Bhuti Raja.	Brahma- Vidya.
5. Laksmanagupta.	Pratyabhijna.
6. Indu Raja.	Dhvani.
7. Bhatta Tota.	Dramaturgy

He had other Gurus also but the subjects have not been specified in their cases. From all his compositions at least 19 such preceptors can be gleaned.

As will be said later, the 10th and 11th centuries in Kashmiri literary lore have been a landmark. The influence of religion has been pronounced. A climate of religions rennaissance was ushered in and many stalwarts like Anandavardhana, Vamana, Ksemendra, Bilhana, Kalhana and last but not the least Abhinavagupta contributed himself in making the sanskrit literary tradition richer and all the more diverse, in as much as, the subjects like

rhetories, dramaturgy, poetry, history and philosophy, were treated in an admirable way. So, it can be of value to learn that the whole family of Abhinavagupta was renowned for its unique literary bent of mind. His uncle Vamana Gupta was an expert in poetics and he initiated our author into this field. In the Abbinava Bharati Abhinavagupta quotes him and is also included in the list of his teachers. His younger brother Manoratha was admitted to the disciplehood of his brother-Abhinava gupta-perhaps he was first in that order. His five cousins Ksema, Utpala, Abhinava, Chakraka and Padamgupta were also very well-read. If Ksema be identified with Ksema Raja the Author of Spanda-Nirnaya and other treatises on Shaivism, then the scholarship of his cousin is beyond doubt. It need not be reitered that his father Narasimhagupta possessed intellectual calibre of highest order and was proficient in all the Shastras and a great devotee of Shiva. In this atmosphere of devotion and learning par excellence, Abhinava Gupta was mentally groomed to undertake the stupendous task awairing him.

So, it is not surprising to find that "Jayaratha" alludes to his being 'Yoginibhu', that his parents while uniting for his birth rose above all wordly desires and identified themselves with Shiva and Shakti. The offspring thus born called Yoginibhu, is looked upon as a fit vehicle for propounding and propagating Shaivistic Monism.

Not only this, Abhnivagupta has been called a Bhairava incarnate by the commentator of Parmartha-Sara; "Yoga - Raja," while commenting on the last line of this treatise:

<verses>

has explained this epithet at length. So the traditional belief amongst the Kashmiri Pandits that Abhinavagupta was a living Bhairava in human form is not without basis.

Now we come to the place of his mental activity. From his own authority we learn that Lalitaditya had got built a palatial house for Atrigupta when he carried him along from Antarvedi to Kashmir (quoted earlier). The house was built on the banks of Vitasta. However, in one of the Msss of Tantraloka belonging to Late Pt. Maheshwar Razdan there is a different reading as <sanskrit> meaning "at the head of Vitasta" i.e. the source. However, in the quotation is used the pronoun <sanskrit> (in) agreeing with <sanskrit> (Srinagar) hence this <sanskrit> seems to be an interpolation.

In the first verse on the Vartika on "Malini Vijaya" it has been specifically laid down:

<*verses*>

"The Kashmirian Abhinavagupta is the East of the city known as Pravarapura (Srinagar) composed the Vartika on the very first verse of "Malinivijya".

From this it is clear that Srinagar was divided into several zones then - East, West etc. and in the East Zone our author lived; but nothing can be said whether this was his ancestral home or an acquired house. However, there is a reft-rence in the Tantraloka of his having shifted to another city at the request of one of his disciples Mandra:

<*verses*>

"Mandra in order to save him (Abhinavagupta) from distraction requested him to shift to his beautiful city."

It is also clear from this, that this earlier house must have been located in a very busy centre of the city, so was not suitable for his calm composure and undivided attention, so necessary for the delineation of such a terse and delicate subject as philosophy.

On the authority of Kalhana we know that Lalitaditya had built three more cities in the outskirts of Pravarapura Srinagar. The one Parihasapura and the other Lali'pura and the third Lokapunya However, the former was meant as a respite for the war-worn king and all the amenities of Parihasa (enjoyment) were provided there: Hence it could not be a quiet city. The latter was not taken kindly to by the king as it was built by his architect in his absence, hence it must have been comparatively deserted and all the same calmer. It might be surmised that Mandra lived there and invited his Guru to that very city for being quieter and far from the madding crowds, so that his "distraction could be averted". The third city along with a cluster of villages was given in offering to Vishnu.

Even though Abhinavagupta lived during the span of 940 - 1015 A. D. but no city worth the name was founded by the kings during this period. Although he saw the reigns of Yashaskara, Samgrama Deva, Ksema Gupta, Didda and Samgrama Raja, yet the cities founded by Lalitaditya still found favour with

the people. Even though one century and a half had elapsed, the twin cities of Parihaspura and Lalitpura had not fallen into oblivion. In the reign of Samgrama Raja (1003 - 1028 A. D.) the Brahmins of Parihasapura started a fast to bring down the fall of Tunga his Prime Minister. This allusion to the city nearly two hundred years after it was founded, testifies to its being very important at that time and might have been the royal capital even.

Before an attempt is made to pen down the contribution of Abhinavagupta to Shaivism, it will be more appropriate to trace the origin of Siva worship in Kashmir. Perhaps as a corollary to this, we shall have to furnish at least the rough contours on which the earliest religion of Kashmiris was based.

The most ancient book on Kashmir History 'Nilamata Purana' specifically lays down that Shiva and His Shakti were propitiated at that time, but other deities such as Ganesha, Puranic gods, Vedic pantheon and even Buddha (as an Avatara) were not ignored. This fact without any doubt proves that earliest Kashmiri religion was polytheistic in content and character, but the worship of Shiva and His consort Parvati had an edge over all other gods. Not only this, the aboriginal deities like Nikumbha etc. were also owned. On the same subject S. C. Ray observes, "that the earliest inhabitants of Kashmir probably cherished some aboriginal beliefs..ID the third cenlury B. C. Buddhism seems to have made some headway in Kashmir. Among Hindu gods Shiva either originated or entered the valley some time before the faith of the Shakya prince.

In this connection the word "Naga used to describe the people of Kashmir, did drop a hint as to its being related to Snake - worship. But word "Naga" in Sanskrit does not mean snake only, it is synonymous with a semi-divine being a cruel person, an elephant or a cloud also. However, Shiva's association with the religion of Kashmir did provide a context for translating "Naga" as a serpent, as it is worn by the Lord around His neck. In this connection H. H. Wilson remarks, "originally, no doubt, it (the religion of Kashmir) was oplute or snake- worship, but this is a part of the Hindu ritual and the Nagas are included in the orthodox parltheon''' So it is abundantly clear that the ancient religion of Kashmir was an amalgam of the "new" as preached by Kashyapa and the old - that of the aboriginals whose king was Nikumbha. Even though other gods were also worshiped, the emphasis on Shiva and His Shakti was pronounced. The influence of Buddhism as such in those times was not worth mentioning, since it was only being adopted by the land then, and after some

time did give a fillip to the philosophical remblings which reigned supreme for nearabout two centuries in Kashmir.

Kalhana has copiously furnished us the proof that Buddhism and orthodox creeds of Shiva and Visnu co-existed in a most tolerant manner here. Whenever any endowment is made for religious purposes, or a Stupa or a Vihara is constructed, the individual or the king, or his members of the family or his Minister with equal zeal and faith constructed shrines of Shiva and Vishnu also.

However, this climate of accomodation between the two faiths - Hinduism and Buddhism was disturbed by the advent of Nagarjuna on the Kashmir scene. He lived at Shadarhatvana (modern Harwan) and took preaching of Buddhism in right earnest. This provoked the "orthodoxy". Insult was added to the injury by King Kanishka (125-60 A.D) who encouraged the propagation of the Buddhistic teachings and gave it royal patronage. Kalhana while recording all this has to say: "After defeating in disputations all learned opponents (Nagarjuna), these enemies of tradition brought to an end etc. the observance of the rites prescribed in the Nilamata." This was a veritable revolt against the established faith of the land and the astute Brahmin lost no opportunity in providing a more palatable alternative to Buddhistic tenets - which may well be called the seeds of Shaivism which sprouted forth in full bloom later.

Perhaps this pre-supposes the give and take which must have preceded before Buddhism went into oblivion in Kashmir. The most potent cause for its decline was that the Shaivism fought on its own ground and assimilated such tenets which were finding favour with the people. Thus the Shaivas on account of their exceptional erudition did provide such a faith to people which though new, was not at all alien. It respected orthodoxy but at the same time did not abhor the "new". A compromise between the two did the trick and Buddhism had to eat the humble pie.

Moreover, the versatile Brahmin of Kashmir did not stop to lick his wounds inflicted by Buddhist propagation, but like a seasoned general attacked its weakest point i. e. the silence about God. Indians at 1arge and a Kashmiri especially, are a God-fearing nation, hcnce the Shaivite knowing full well this credulity of a Kashmiri, transplanted God again in their faith by naming it Paramshiva or Sadashiva with its antecedent - the Para Shakti. In all the treatises on Shaivism hair-splitting arguments are laid down in proving the existence of the "Supreme Soul". Hence the Buddhists had to take up to their

heels in the absence of any powerful counter- argument on this subject. Perhaps the people in general, also became sceptic about their faith, because their belief in God is skin-deep. This has actually permeated their marrow even. They could consequently not reconcile themselves with more are less "Godless" faith. The adage "Had there been no God, Man would have invented one" was proved to the hilt in Kashmir. Herein it will be of interest to mention that Shankaracharaya's visit to Kashmir acted as the last nail in the Buddhist coffin.

Shankara after his unparalled victory over the Buddhists in plains came to Kashmir sometime about the second decade of the 9th century. Even though no other reference regarding his visit to Kashmir has been traced as yet, the popular tradition corroborates its authenticity. This cannot be dismissed cheaply, in as much as, that on the perusal of Shankra's treatises it becomes patently clear that his compositions did influence the Kashmiri Saiva literature; more so his imprint on Pratyabhijna (theory of recognition) is obviusly discerned. In his "Dakhshina Murti Stotra" commented upon by his pupil Sureshvaracharya the conception of ultimate reality as preached by him and known as Tantric philosophy and that expounded in Pratyabhijna seems to be tbe same. Not only this, even some technical terms as used in Pratyabhijna have been earlier used by him in the same sense:

(1)

<verses>

(Dakshina Murti Stotra Commentary (2), 13)

(2)

<verses>

(Ishwara Pratyabhijna Vimarshini- 1, 39)

Translation:(i)
" The universe has been created out of knowledge and action and seems also possessed of consciousness."

Translation:(ii)
" Knowledge and action are considered the source of all living beings."

(1)

<*verses*>

(Dakshina Murti Stotra Commentary (2), 13)

(2)

<*verses*>

(Ishwara Pratyabhijna Vimarshini 1, 207)

Translation:(i)
"Therefore, that shining spirit follows everywhere the opposite direction (beyond time and space)."

Translation:(ii)
" The shining supreme spirit is not bound by space and time."

Such examples can be multiplied and so the internal evidence culled from the compositions of Shankara regarding his coming to Kashmir and subsequently not only the thought but even the expresions being found common in both (as above), it may be safely inferred that he did come to Kashmir and had presumably discussions with the propounders of Shaiva faith here. On a profound perusal of his "Saundarya Lahari" it becomes lucid that he got influenced also by Kashmirian Shaiva Acharyas and did concede the existence of monistic Tantras and also their number:

<*verses*>

(Saundaraya Lahari)

Translation:
(O Devi), You having built the whole universe with sixty four Tantras............

Hence we come to the stage when Buddhism being banished, the vaccum thus created began to be filled by the Acharayas of Saivism who had the blessings of Shankaracharya also.

However, the Buddhists definitely earn credit for initiating the modus operandi of discussions, symposia and religious congregations for

propagating their philosophy and projecting this to the masses. We have references of Buddhist councils being held here in Ashoka's and Kanishka's time. In this connection Dr. R. K. Kaw has to say "It will be observed that Buddhists initiated a critical view in matters which were so far believed only as gospel truths." Hence as a reaction to this, the Brahmin votaries of Shiva and Shakti also inducted into their cult the method of philosophal reasoning and persuasive argumentation. "Shaiva Literature" is fully replete with these two ingredients.

The whole of Shaiva literature comes under the name of Trika, Trikashastra or Trikashasana. The derivation of the epithet "Trika" among other things can be ascribed to triple principle with which this system deals e. g. Shiva, Shakti, Anu; Pati, Pasha and Pashu; Nara, Shakti and Shiva; Para and Apara. and Parapara and finally Bheda, Abheda; Bheda, and Abehda; or it may have been called as such, "For the reason that its chief authority is the the triad consisting of three chief Agamas - Siddha, Namaka, and Malini. This literature falls into three categories:

i) The Agama - Shastra.
ii) The Spanda - Shastra.
iii) Pratyabhijna - Shastra.

"The Agamas are believed to be revelations, having come down through ages." These emphasize the doctrine of Jnana (knowledge) and Kriya (action) for becoming one with the superself.

The most important composition of this branch are the "Shiva Sutras." Their authorship is attributed to Lord Shiva and were in course of time revealed to Sage Vasugupta. On the authority of Raja Tarangini we know that Bhatta Kallata, the pupil of Vasugupta lived in the reign of Avanti Varman (855- 883 A. D.)

Hence it is clear that Vasugupta whose reputation was established as a Shaiva teacher must have preceded him at least by 30 years if not more i.e. 825 A. D. The purpose of writing this thesis (or comunicating it as the tradition goes) was to counteract the dualistic teachings in vogue at that time. In Shivasutra Vimarshini by Kshema Raja, it is clearly laid down:

<verses>

" The occult school (of Saiva) may not get into oblivion by the preaching of duality amongst the people - with this purpose."

So the Agamas taught the pure non-dualistic Monism.

The Spandashastra aclually amplifies the main principles of shaivism in greater detail than the Shiva-Sutras. The main treatise on this Shastra is Spanda Sutras or Karikas which have been commented upon by Kallata, Ramakantha, Utpalavaishnava (Not of Shaiva School) and Kshema Raja. The content of philosophical reasoning is missing in the main treatise, while the commentators have tried to supply it with meaningful success. Kshema Raja in his commentary ascribes to Vasugupta the authorship of this Shastra also. But Utpala (Vaishnava) uses the unambiguous phrase while commenting on the very first Sutra in his Pradipika. He gives it as "Sangraha- granthakrta" meaning "a work which gathers together the meaning of Shiva Sutras." In one of his verses he attributes its authorship to Bhatta Kallata via Vasu Gupta. But this verse is not found in the recension of Kshema Raja. However, it is to make clear that contents being the same in Shiva-Sutras and Spanda Sutras the authorship could not be different. As the Shiva-Sutras have been revealed to Vasu Gupta, hence Spanda Shastra may also be his acquisition.

The word "Spanda" as prefixed with this branch of Trika means "a throb", "quivering" or "movement." The quivering of the mind receives the beautitude of the "Super soul" and hence attains ~he "Nishkampa Pradipa" ‹ unquivering flame of the lamp as given in Bhagvad Gita, or the name to this treatise may be explained as the "throbs of Lord Shiva" clothed in words by later Yogis and Siddhas such as Vasugupta etc.

The third and the most important school of Shaivadarshan is the Pratyabhijna cult with which our author is directly concerned. Somananda is said to be the originator of this branch and has been called as "Tarksya Karta" meaning the founder of reasoning". He was a pioneer in grafting the element of argument reasoning, support and refutations on rational lines into this system. The first book of this system is "Shiva Drishti" whose authorship is attributed to Soma Nanda. Unfortunately this masterly treatise is now extant upto four Ahnikas (Chapters) only; atleast it had seven as is clearly quoted by Abhinavagupta in Para- Trimsika. Perhapes this is the main reason as to why his erudite commentator Utpaladeva does not go beyond 74th verse of the IV Ahnika. Subsequently the three chapters were salvaged and the number made seven;

but it seems that these form a part of the Vrtti (gloss) compiled by Somananda himself and not the original one. Tho "Forte" of Somananda's teaching is:

<verses>

"Shiva" the auspicious and Supreme soul, is the giver and he is the enjoyer. This whole universe is (permeated by) Shiva."

His disciple and at times taken to be his son also. Utpaladeva commented in a most scholastic manner on the "Shiva Drishti" of Soma Nanda, and for the first time introduced the element of Pratyabhijna in Shaiva literature. He named his treatise, though based on the doctrine taught by Somananda as "Ishwara Prtayabhijna-Karikas" in Sutra form consisting of four Adhikaras (cantos), further sub-divided into a number of Ahnikas or sections. He also propounded "Svatantriya" theory of his own, independent of his Guru Somananda. By Svatantriya he means the "self dependent power of the lord". His exposition of the "Recognition Doctrine" has the sanctity and the authority what it should have deserved, and was even equated with Somananda the orginator as:

<verses>

"Reflection of the wisdom of Somananda" (Ishwara Pratyabhijna Vimarshini - 2, introduction)

Perhaps being very much enamoured by the wisdom of Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta composed the shorter and longer versions of his commentary on the Ishwara Pratyabhijna of Utpala; who discarding all other names for this system annointed it with Pratyabhijna - recognition. This name alone has stood the test of time and is perhapes synonymous with Trika as a whole; while in, essence this is not the case.

The order of Gurus (Guru Parampara) as given in Shaiva Darshani's as follows:

<verses>

"I bow to Lord Shiva, Vasugupta, Somananda, and Utpalacharaya, Lakshmana (Gupta), Abhinavagupta and Kshema Raja."

A faint echo of teacher-taught relation can also be heard into it. Vasugupta pupil of Lord Shiva, Somananda pupil of Vasugupta, Utpala pupil of Soma

Nanda, Abhinavagupta pupil of Lakshmanagupta and Kshemaraja the pupil of Abhinavagupta. Had both Vasugupta and Somananda been the pupils of Lord, then the insertion of "Cha" would have made it clear.

From this it is clear that Vasugupta and Somananda represent the originators through the good offices of Lord Shiva while Utpala, Lakshmanagupta, Abhinavagupta and Kshemaraja constitute the heirs to this system, who in their own way interpreted, supplemented and enriched the word sent to the humanity by Lord Shiva through the first two Gurus.

Out of a host of such interpretors Abhinavagupta is not only the best but also possessed of multifaced genius. Not confining himself to the ramifications of "Saiva Darshan" he also strayed into the domain of Rhetorics by subscribing to Rasa theory in his commentary on Bharata Natya Shastra, and also into poetics when elucidating the "Dhvani" as enunciated by Ananda Vardhana. However, we have to delimit his versatility and shall describe him only as a religious philosopher.

However, before embarking upon this, it will not be out of place to give roughly the main characteristics of this "Darshan" so that in light of these, we might determine the place of Abhinavagupta as a philosopher; as to how he explained these and for sooth, even improved upon these.

The " Saiva Shasana" starts with the assumption that Atman is the real and innermost self in everything. It does not undergo any change and is a vehicle to experience the "Parameshwara" or the Chaitanayam. This "Parameshwara" or Param Shiva" is not bound by time, space and form, so is omnipotent and omnipresent. However, He has a dual role - the one which pervades whole of the universe and the other transcendental in which he defeats all mainfestations. His power of pervading the universe is called Shakti, but coming out of His fountain-head is only an aspect of His and not in any way different from Him. Even though these Energies or powers have been called numerous, yet only five are the most notable. The Chita Shakti (the power of resplendence), Ananda Shakti (the power of bliss), Ichha Shakti (the power of desire), Jnana Shakti (the power of knowledge), and the Kriya Shakti (the power of action), with the help of these, the "Paramshiva" manifests itself which in Saiva language is called Udaya, Unmesha, Abhasa or Srishti.

However, to create a universe is the necessity even though He is world-incarnate. Hence the universe has been thought to be composed of "Shiva

Tattva (pure, auspicious element), Shakti Tattva (potential element), Sadakhya Tattva (the element of self realisation, or being), Aishwaraya Tattva (element of identification) and last but not the least the Sad-Vidya Tattva (the element of true perception). When in between the self and self-realization, Maya (obduration, delusion) obscures the real form of objects, the Sadhaka (experiencer) has to rise above Kala (time), Niyati (sequence), Raga (attachment), Vidya (limited perception of consciousness), Kala (limited authorship). Such an experiencer who has been doped by Maya and is obsessed with time etc. is called "Purusha". Simultaneously with it is also born Prakritis, that latent power in him which goads him onto act or react. To awake from the slumber under the influence of Maya, the Purusha conjointly with Prakriti has to undergo some mental drill and comprehend the implication of Buddhi (conception), Ahanakara (personal I or ego) and Manas (desire). Taken in reverse order, the desire actuates "I" ness and at the last stage conception of things becomes clear. Hence the Purusha awakenes by rejecting Maya and its five concomitents beginning with Time (Kala) etc, comes face to face with chitswaroopam resplendence or Shambhavi state and attains the Paramaishwarya or Self-dependence (Supreme bliss). This is the purport of Shaiva Darshan or Shaiva Monism as given in the "Shiva Sutra" and "Shiva Drishiti" on broad lines.

Dr. K.C. Pandey has given a long list of some 41 compositions attributed to Abhinavagupta. Among these some bear dates, some are referred to by subsequent authors and some have been owned by tradition. However, the most famous works of his on "Shaiva darshan", strictly speaking are:

1. Para - Trimshika Vivarna.
2. Prataybhijna Vimarshini (expurgated).
3. Pratyabhijna Vivriti Vimarshini (full)
4. Tantrasara
5. Tantraloka
6. Parmarthasara
7. Commentary on Bhagvadgita called Gitartha-Sangraha.

Many other compositions of his such as "Shiva Drishtyalocana" commentary on "Shiva Drishti" as the name clearly signifies, is lost.

Chronologically speaking the "Para Trimshika" seems to be his first work in the "Shaiva Lore". It is in reality composed of the concluding portion of

"Rudrayamala Tantra" belonging to Agama school on which Abhinavagupta penned down a commentary calling it Vivarna. However, the title of the book suggests it containing thirty verses only (Trimshika), but it has even more than these. There seems to be some confusion amongst the later commentators regarding its name, while the author himself has tried to justify it like this:

"Trimshika" is so called because it is the Supreme Lord of three powers desire, knowledge, and action."

<*verses*>

'Para' in Shiava terminology is identical with 'Parasamvid' - the highest power of Self-Dependence. Hence 'Para Trimshika' would connote 'thirty verses of Self-Dependence', or the Super Lord of the triple formula of desire, knowledge, and action.

Pratyabhijnavimarshini and its larger edition Viviriti belong to the Pratyabhijna (recognition) school of Shaiva Shastra as propounded by Utpala Deva and orginated by Somananda.

Tantrasara and Tantraloka deal with the same contents with the difference that the former is a brief Summary (Sara) of the !atter, a voluminous treatise. The Tantrasara is couched in prose while the Tantraloka is in metrical form. These are definitely based on Malini Vijayatantra belonging to Agama school.

Parmarthsara is a philosophical composition of 105 verses and is supposed to be based on the Karikas of Shesha. In his Gitarthasangraha, Abhinavagupta has emphatically declared that freedom from all miseries can be obtained by seeing Him (Paramshiva) in everything and everywhere. This freedom cannot be achieved by renunciation of the world. The battle between Pandvas and Kaurvas is actually the race between Vidya (knowledge, perception) and Avidya (ignorance, blurred perception).

From the above it is clear that Abhinavagupta not only explained Pratyabhijna on which his fame rests, but also other Tantric works belonging to different schools. He did not believe in isolation but in collation which is the keynote of his philosophic bent of mind . Other commentators like Utpala, Kshemaraja etc. confined themselves to a single path but Abhinavagupta not only rode on other paths but also proved the old adage "All roads lead to Rome." He made a

compromise between different views and presented such a philosophy of life which never grew stale. His synthesis - oriented approach to life gave a meaningful and healthy direction to his ideas.

Philosophy, strictly speaking, is the science of knowledge or the Tattva Vidya, the lore of the real nature of human soul or malerial world as being identified with the supreme spirit. Since knowledge emanates from Him, hence it can be usefully used as a medium to interpret Him. If there be no originality and no Shaivacharya has claimed it, since "Shivasutras" are the word of God, tlle originality definitely lies in interpreting these and unravelling the esoteric content in a most intelligible and homely idiom. In this field also Abhinavagupta has no parallel.

It is also to be remembered that our author does not rest his oars on the philosophic polemics, but also connects these with the ritual. Herein also he shows a master - mind in fitting ritual with philosophy, the mundane with the the spirit, the real with the ideal and to crown all practice with the precept. On account of his versatile genius he is at home in explaining the abstract in the context of the concrete. While revelling in the super world he does not forget the world as such. He is not a dreamer but an awake artist feeling rightly the pulse of supersensuousness but at the same time not forgetting the converse form of it. He tries to explore the obverse and the converse at the same time. Hence his treatment of the subject is more realistic. Perhaps that is the main reason as to why pratyabhijna school though bequeathed to him by earlier Acharyas was actually made popular by him. He not only translated the terse philosophy in the tongue of the people but also gave it the most natural direction. Abhinavagupta does not claim any originality for introducing this "Shaiva Darshan", but most candidly records:

<*verses*>

"Having thought over the views of Shri Somananda, I systematized these."

Moreover, in the realm of philosophy, originality is a misnomer; because the philosophy as such is the cumulative thinking processed through ages and then finding expression through the pen or mouth of an erudite scholar. Even Shankara without mincing words, categorically states that the authenticity of a system is to be tested on the touchstone of Vedas. Somananda, the originator of Pratyabhijna school admits that his "Shaivadrishti" is based on Shastras, though his pupil Utpalacharya testifies to its showing new path for final

emanicipation. In all humility (because true knowledge bestows humility) Abhinavagupta follows the same tradition of thinking.

It may be contended tbat he did not compose any treatise independently, but only commented upon the works of his predecessors. Therefore he can be a commentator at best, but not an original thinker. Commentary from Abhinavagupta's view point is not merely a jugglery of words but actually the personal exporience gained through spiritual experiments. He lived the maxims on which he commented. So in the exposition of such matters he sets for himself three norms - first being the personal experience, reason the second, and ancient authority the third. So the contribution of Abhinavagupta to this system of philosophy is not simply of academic interest but is replete with other dimensions of thinking which even the originators failed to comprehend. The commentators preceding him gave mere dogmatic statements of the basic tenets of the Spanda school. They dared not subtract or add to these by way of argument, reasoning and judicious explanation for or against the fundamental principles. Even though some commentators notably Utpalacharya did introduce the element of argument into it, but his domain was only one - sided related to Pratyahhijna only and not the "Trika" as a whole. Abhinavagupta on the contrary did improve on him, though being his disciple, making it broad-based and embraching the whole gamut of Shaiva Shastra. He provided rational base to it and also dwelt on the ritualistic aspect of this system. He has exhaustively explained the Monistic Shaiva rituals also. He made a happy blend of philosophy and psychology, quoted extensively from the Agamas and other established authorities; perhaps he has every right to assert:

<verses>

"I (we) will unravel the "unseen" at the bidding of my Guru and Lord."

This verse does allude to the shortcomings of the earlier commentators who could not convert <sanskrit> (unseen) into <sanskrit> (seen3) and so it was left to Abhinavagupta to perceive it in light perspective and accordingly transmit it to others through his writings - commentaries. His scathing criticism of Buddhists and schools of philosophy other than Shaiva with biting wit and pungent sarcasm is perhaps the most original content of what he has written.

His brief yet most pregnant definition of "Trika" definitely portrays his mastry over this system:

<*verses*>

"The unison of Shiva (Paramashiva) and "Shakti" (Para Shakti) is termed as supertrika".

Very succinctly he also lays down the aim of this Shastra - "The removal of veil of ignorance." However, the fundamental difference between the Vedanta and Shaivism though professing the same aim, is real rather than apparent. In Vedanta the negation of the facts of experience are a must presupposition for realization of the self; The illusion regarding the snake and rope is quite known. But in Trika there is no negative approach towards the universe but in fact an affirmation of the facts of experience with new interpretation. With this positive understanding of the environs, the realizer is simply face to face with self-recognition which in Shaiva-terminolgy is called self-realization.

While dealing with Pratyabhijna (self-recognition) Guru Somananda defines it as the two fold function of perception and rememberance in its totality at the same time. Utpala Deva thinks that the term Pratyabhijna connotes, the power of self, the power of cognition and power of action - a triple amalgm:

<*verses*>

In this realm also Abhinavagupta shows his originality in defining the term "Pratyabhijna" as:

<*verses*>

"Recognition of that supreme self is to be face to face with what was forgotten through effulgence (of consciousness).

While explaining the word Pratipam he very lucidly says that " (it) means that which was forgotten, or concealed but now coming into view not through rememberance but by clear cognition."

Furthermore to make it more lucid, Abhinavagupta explains that cognition is composed of:

<*verses*>

"When the past perception and the present perception are revived (by the object coming in full view) ".

<*verses*>

Giving an example of past perception and present perception and their getting revived he says:

<*verses*>

"He is that very Chaitra" (name of a person, who was already seen befor). His coming face to face now is called present perception and his cognition (that he is really the same person) was done by the previous or past perception, the bridge between the perceptions being rememberance born of mental impression. Our author's independent thinking can very easily be inferred from an ingenious definition of Pratyabhijna.

Herein he does not follow his preceptor but provides a very homely definition, when he says that the Lord is possessed of Infinite Powers. This characteristic of Him is corroborated extensively by Puranas, Siddhantas and Agamas as also by reasoning and inference etc. When by direct experience we ascertain His Nature in our own self, this map be termed as having recognized Him, or in other words, the cognition takes place.

Abhinavagupta does not consider remembrance the only vehicle af identifying the present perception with the past one. Even though Somananda explicitly lays down the role of rememberance in connecting the present and past perception and Utpala also endorses it; Abhinavagupta comments:

<*verses*>

"But being face to face and not by remembering alone, the knowledge (perception) because of being made clear, Recognition takes place."

He very cogently argues that rememberance is related to sight; first having seen a certain object we are reminded of it when some such farm crosses our eyes. But there are cases of falling in love without seeing each other, wherein the medium of arousing love and accepting the lover from the depths of heart is confined to "either the words of female messenger or confidante or the perception of such traits in him (as heing her ideal) or by any other deeds

which made him renowned, she is persuaded to accept him". Here in this case sight has played no part, hence the image which first sight would have caught cannot bo repeated at the subsequent sights. The rememberance is altogether absent in it. The master philosopher goes on to argue that in this case the love-lorn lady naturally weaves the pictures of his beauty, gallantry or any other exceptional distinction on the authority of three sources mentioned above. This picture will definitely be at variance with the one if the lover meets her incognito. There is no repetition of image as in the case of "Chaitra" (given earlier), how will the recogoition take place? Abhinavagupta raising the controversy himself provides a most plausible answer to this predicament. When incognito hero is introduced as lover whom she has been loving for his qualities all along, the heroine receives a shock instead of joy. As long as the qualities of the hero are not revealed to her and she certifies these by her own experience and also on the authenticity of others. "He is that very person" the recognition is not so simple and easy. Hence the obstruction between what has becn heard and what is actually seen is to be removed, so that the identification between the "imaginary" and the "real" is possible. Thus at this juncture the recognition is possible only by the removal of the veil as also the reconciliation between both the mental images one imaginary or unseen and the other seen or face to face. Accordingly Abhinavagupta supplements the rememberance (smarn) with (anubhav) cognition derived from personal observation or experience. On the seeming contradition between unity and plularity, Utpaladeva contends that:

<*verses*>

"The internal reality of things of diverse nature is unity".

<*verses*>

"that very unity attaining the knowledge or perception of senses."

<*verses*>

"gets multiplied under the influence of time, space and real nature of objects." Like an original thinker Abhinavagupta makes it more clear and simple by saying:

<*verses*>

"The cause or no cause are one and same, so unity and plurality can be the attributes of one and same object."

<*verses*>

"So, in essence the objects internally are one consciousness, but practically speaking as being differentiated by the blue and yellow (colours) unchangeable indeterminate or determinate imply multiplicity externally at the illusionary level."

It will be pertinent here to allude to the aim of the system of philosophy as preached by Abhinavagupta. The unavoidable preamable to every philosophic thought is to describe the why and what of that what teacher or preacher wishes us to know. In the treatment of this subject Abhinavagupta set norms of personal experience, reasoning and thirdly the scripture and in the context of these he tries to explain the domain of his experience. Herein he exhibits a marvellous sense of independent judgment. He does not accept the theories of Logicians is given in Nyaya Shastra, of as expounded in Vaishesika in details or fundaments. From the dualism of Sankhya, idealism of Baudhas and monism of Vedanta he only differs mostly in fundamentals. According to him the world of experience is not God-made nor a portion of Prakriti (Sankhya) nor purely a subjective experience (Baudhas), nor even a mere illusion (Vedanta). It is real as it is a manifestation of superself or universal consciousness. In support of his theory he introduces the Abhasa Vada, which to define most briefly in his own words:

" All that is i.e. all that can be said to exist in any way and with regard to which the use of any kind of language is possible be it the subject, the object or the means of knowledge or the knowledge itself, is Abhasa."

He further contends that subject and object cannot be divorced from each other, so the self also from the not - self. Knowledge of objects is the the inter-mixture of the both, if these are treated as separate and opposite entities, there cannot be any concordance between these just as between light and darkness. Hence Abhinavagupta most cogently supplies the answer:

<*verses*>

"The (ultimate) in form is immanent and without form is transcendental."

In order to discriminate between His two aspects- transcendental and immanetnt-Vimarsha is the inevitable instrument. It could have been compared to the image- reflecting nature of a mirror, but during darkness images cannot be reflected, hence it needs external agents to illumine it. But the self does not need any such illuminator and can receive images by virtue of his self - independence "Svatantraya."

This Abhasa in its immanent aspect is composed of "Prakasha" and "Vimarsha" .

ln Shaiva terminology by "Prakasha" is meant residual traces also which are essentially the same as their substratum. As has been said above, these images being reflected are the same as Prakasha - the cause of reflection-light-in the ordinary sense. This "Prakasha" is definitely synonymous with "Sanskara". "Vimarsha" may be explained as the power of self to know it- in all its purity and not being obssessed by affections whatsoever.

Abhinavagupta has most successfully made his point in this field by saying:

<verses>

"This Self- Dependence (Svatantraya) faculty is essentially the power of action, which propels the "bliss of consciousness" and that may be taken as Vimarsha, its proponderence is quite appropriate."

This word "Svatantraya" has been given other names also by the Preceptors of Shaivism Vasugupta calls it "Chaitanya" being associated with "Chita" mind. The Spanda school takes it as "Sphurta" or Spanda. It is also called as ''Mahasatta'' and Paravak. This extraordinary interest in this faculty of "Svatantraya" by Shaiva teachers only proves as to what importance they attach to it. Perhaps it will be pertinent to relate here the conception of "Maya" as propounded by "Shaivas" and what personal contribution has been made by Abhinavagupta to illustrate and explain it.

"Maya" has been treated as a force of obscuration.

<verses>

It is more precisely born of the limited experience and so the perception of that universal experience gets blurred hence called "Ashudhavan" the path of impurity, as also the Mayadhavan, the course of Maya.

However, Abhinavagupta, gives a very concise yet pregnant definition of "Maya" by saying that "Maya" is the unmixed part of that transcendental self which engenders the shade of distinction in His "Svatantraya" power bereft of any kind of aids." Moreover this very faculty infatuates hence may be equated with Moha (embarrasment). Hence he says "Maya is the name of seduction". By the introduction of the word "Moha" as an equivalent of Maya it becomes very easy for the layman even to understand it in essence, the Moha of Arjuna being very well known. This Maya not only conceals the true nature of things and also self, but the experience of of identity with the super-self is also obliterated. To bridge the presence of identity of the self with the superself, the Jnana (perception) plays a prominent part.

The Jnana (true perception) has been enunciated as having two aspects, Baudha (intellectual) and Paurusha (spiritual), the latter is the panacea for removing the obscuration because "the experiencer having attained the stage of Highest bliss when his animal instincts have vanished altogether," finds that kind of perception which can differentiate between the real and the unreal. Consequently the course of Maya is replaced by "Transparent course."

Now the idea of "Moksha" (emancipation) as conceived by the Shaivas deserves some mention. While defining "Moksha", Abhinavagupta has to say:

<*verses*>

"The purity of consciousness, devoid of significance or otherwise is not only called "Moksha" but can taken any other name also."

Proceeding further, he explains the consciousness as:

<*verses*>

"The state of consciousness is nothing but Supreme perception."

From the above it is clear that "Moksha" is subjective realization of one's self and is both unilluminable by any external agent and unknowable by any means of knowledge.

It is super-transcendental state of experience. The three impurities of Maya comprising perception, action and innate ignorance (Anava) are to be surpassed as a whole. The predominance of Jnana (perception) is treated as a means of emancipation by other systems of Indian philosophical thought too, but Shaivas do not subscribe to this view in totality. They contend that even if the Jnana impurity is conquered, still the realizer cannot be treated as having been liberated in real sense of the term, in as much as, the two remaining impurities still persist in him. Hence the perfect freedom according to Trika can be got only through cognition - when all these three impurities get dissolved simultaneously into that supreme soul (Samvit).

Finally, the image of Abhinavagupta as a philosopher can remain incomplete if his arguments to refute various theories of Buddhists, Sankhyas, Naiyayikas and others are not reproduced here. Among the four schools of Buddhistic philosophy only two Sautantrikas and Vijnanvadins have been singled out for criticism by Abhinavagupta.

The first school argues that perception is momentary, since everything is momentary. The object of perception justt as a jar etc. ceases to exist immediately after casting it reflection on the eye and other sense-organs. By inference it can be established that the object aod its reflection cannot co-exist. The one being the cause and the other the effect.

Abhinavagupta proceeds most intelligently to smash this verbose of Buddhist argumentative acumen.

"This external object is prone to perception, if this is not the case then no inference can be drawn even. From the rising smoke the inference of fire is quite clear, but the fire as such has already caught our perception in our kitchen or elsewhere." So it becomes quite clear that object cannot be detached from the subject. If these two are divided, then the question of building a bridge from one to another is very difficult.

The Vijnanavadins (sensationalists) do no at all believe in the existence of the external world. According to them self- consciousness is momentary and proceeds in the form of a chain or a stream. The links in chain are the Vasanas, which generate numerous sensations, called as daily cognitions. Hence a cognition is nothing but a presentiment brought about by Vasana. Abhinavagupta proceeds to refute this theory by vomittig out the contradiction inherent in this theory in as much as this school of Buddhistic

philosophy divides the existenciality in two groups the real (parmartha) and the apparent. The Vijnana only is real and that is reflected in it has only an apparent entity. The learned Shaiva commentator further contends logically that even if the apparent be unreat but its causes or source is to be admitted as real; but how can what is nothing in itself be the cause of something? When the sensationalist brings in the Vasana element he merely repeats what the Bahayarthavadin means by object. How can even Vasana be the cause of presentiments which have no variety in themselves, and if each stream of self-consciousness is different from the rest, if the sensation caused by its own Vasana is exclusive and independent of each other, then each soul will be living in a world of its own and there would be no collaboration of many individuals in respect of the same object for instance carrying a heavy log.

Furthermore, Abhinavagupta proceeds to dismantle the house of sand built by Mimamsakas whose chief exponent is said to be Kumarila Bhatta. His Prakatatavada lays down that the relation between the subject and object is brought about by the "movement of the knowing-self and is an object of internal perception." He takes knowledge to mean simply an act of cognisor which engenders perception and manifested state in the object.

<*verses*>

Abhinavagupta proceeds to remark that Kumarila being a dualist cannot conceive the self-effulgent nature of knowledge. If the subject and object have an exclusive existence at the time of cognition and at the stage of manifestation, this is a part of the object exactly as are the other qualities such as blackness, in the case of a jar; but it should be manifest to all and, not to a few, as can be inferred from what Kumarila says. In this way, if a jar is made by a potter- its creator - then as the mimamsakas contend it should only become manifest to him alone. So this theory of manifestedness is not tenable as it cannot exptain the fact of individual experience.

The Naiyayika's theory of knowledge consists in taking it as the illuminator of the object illuminated. The knowledge can be taken as the lamp which makes the object manifest:

<*verses*>

This example of lamp for knowlcdge is not appropnate. The lamp shines independently without having any kind of relation with any object it

illuminates; knowledge is not so. It cannot be divorced from its antecedents. Moreover while imparting its light to the object actually transfers its own luminosity to it, because as we know that the appearance of the object is dependent on the 1ight, but thc Naiyayikas do not hold that knowledge can affect the object, so it cannot hold water in view of the refutation given above. Now we turn over to Sankya system of philosophy which lays down that intellect is composed of three qualities - Sattva (transparence), Rajas (mobility) and Tamas (inertia). However, the content of "Sattva" (transparance) is predominant in it, so it is spotless by Nature. So it can receive reflection on all sides. It is like a mirror wherein the light of self-luminous self within and the reflection of an object outside become one. The aid of thc intellect has been refuted by Abhinavagupta as follows:

The example of mirror and jar on which this theory is based is not correct, because according to this, then the reflecting agent and reflected object should be similar in their nature. Actually it is not the case; the intellect is sentient and the other insentient. They are definitely opposite to each other. Secondly even Sankhya will never admit that transperance of intellect is more than that of the self, such as the reflection of a flame in a mirror or that of the sun in the water; it cannot even satisfactorily answer that Buddhi with the light of the Luminous - self does itself become light or not. So the separate identity of intellect from the self is never possible, hence this theory does not cut much ice. So his verdict the insentient cannot have the capacity to manifest the objects, cannot stand any review whatsoever. It is definitely logically true and convincing.

Abhinavagupta does not even spare the "Dualist Shaivas" from his trenchent criticism. According to tbis Dualistic school of Shaivism whose chief advocate is Khetapala, the ignorance is a veil which conceals the perfection of self in respect of powers of knowledge and action. Accordingly each soul by its separate variety of power cannot come face to face with that perfection which has been actually hidden by this (power etc), when this concealing power of ignorance is shattered by Divine grace in the case of a soul, then only the soul retains its former glory.

Abhinavagupta begins the refutation with a pertinent inquiry as to what can be the reason of the destruction or otherwise of this ignorance. It can not be action because it is acknowledged to be the cause of pleasant or unpleasant experience which a person enjoys or suffers. Lord's will cannot be also

responsible for this because He is above partiality. He will not free some and imprison others. Thee second pertinent query made by Abhinavagupta is to the effect that what and how this ignorance conceals? Souls have been called eternal and un- changing, so ignorance cannot conceal these, if we concede this, then the souls will have to become transitory. If it can affect the changeless souls, then the liberated soul of even "Shiva" cannot remain unaffected by the concealing power of knowledge and action. If this will be the case, the cognition of self can never take place. Hence this theory is not only self-contradictory but also deluding.

In this scholarly way Abhinavagupta has very intelligenlly pointed to "Achilles heel" inherent in each of these systems of philosophy and has unerringly established the superiority of his faith over all others. He has no mercy, no compunction in riding rough - shod over the "premise" of his rivals. Their seemingly convincing arguments cannot bear the inherent supermacy of his thought as also of his diction, and get melted like snow before the scorching rays of the sun.

Abhinavagupta like a true son of the soil, does not advocate a fanatical devotion to his line of thinking. He allows us every right to differ from him, but the irrestible charisma of his thought, couched in dignified language - does definitely enthral us. To speak squarely, he pleads for facing life and not fleeing from it. Like a practical thinker he exhorts us to eschew the meaning of life and afterwards yoke ourselves to redeem it in its truest possible perspective. His pasitive attitude to life and universe makes the existence more meaningful and hence rewarding.

He does not preach to discard the world and disown its attendant responsibilities, because it is essentialy real. He instead of it, asks us to recognize ourselves in the image of the Lord who is not at all different from us. A person ought to develop true perception ‹ healthy attitude for looking at his environment ‹ then only he can recognise Him in himself and become likewike self-effulgent. The distance between the "ideal" and "real" can be easily fathomed by cognition when the mind is prepared to receive and emit images like an unblurred mirror.

Abhinavagupta performed his mission adrmirably and saved the humanity from the Jig-saw of intellectual acrobatics of Buddhist theology, culminating in nothingness, and in the same way from the Jargon of other systems of Indian philosophy which neither preach practical approach nor practical thinking,

only telling us to reject the "present" just to prepare for "future". But Abhinavagupta affirms the existence of the present and treats it not as a means but as an end itself. Living in the present, taking life as it comes, taming it by the strength of perception and cognition is a sound prescription for the strife- torn world even at present, when its restiveness can easily be converted into quiet calm of super soul.

His attitude to life and its chief actor man - is summed up in this couplet; which he has understandably quoted from the Shastras:

<*verses*>

He, whose hands, feet, mind, learning, religious austerity and conduct are well balanced (restrained), enjoys the fruits of piligrimage (even without going there)".

So, this Kashmiri philosopher weaning philosophy away from the mire of impracticability lives up to his name Abhinava. New from all angles, and his thought-provnking treatises breathe an air of ravishing freshness, even after a lapse of more than ten centuries.

Abhinavagupta

The Encyclopaedic Scholar

- R. K. Jalali
Koshur Samachar

THE present generation of Kashmiris is largely ignorant of the great luminaries - sages, saints and mystics - who from time immemorial not only gave new dimensions to the development of Kashmiri culture but also developed the cultural heritage of our homeland. One such luminary was Abhinavagupta Acharya. An outstanding Indian philosopher, a great intellectual and a writer on aesthetic theory, Abhinavagupta was a spiritual descendant of Somananda, founder of the Pratyabijnya metaphysics, the "recognition" school of Kashmiri Shaivist monism.

Introduction

As it is beyond the scope of this article to set out or elucidate the tenets of Kashmir monistic Shaivism and its great exponents, here only a brief introduction to the life and works of Abhinavagupta is given. Kashmir Shaivism was developed in the light of monism by great thinkers such as Somananda, Kallata, Utpala, Abhinavagupta and Khsemraja. Somananda, the author of Sivadristi who flourished towards the close of the 9th Century A.D., has been described as the founder of the Pratyabhijnya system; Utpaladeva, the author of Isvara Pratyabhijnya Sutras or Karikas, who lived about 900-950 A.D., is regarded as the organiser of this system; and Abhinavagupta, the author of the two commentaries, Laghvi-Vimarsini and Brahati- Vimarsini and also Tantraloka, is known as the expounder and commentator of Kashmir Shaivaism. The later teachers who flourished between A.D. 1200 and 1800 included Kshemaraja, Yogaraja, Jayaratha, Sivopadyaya and Bhaskaracharya.

Ancestors

We get an authentic, though brief, account of Abhinavagupta's ancestors, parents, relatives, his several gurus and his distinguished works from his own commentaries. In the concluding lines of his commentary on the Paratrinshika which is a dialogue between Bhairava (Shiva) and Bhairavi (Shakti) in 35 Slokas and at the end of Ishwar Pratyabijnya Vimarsini, Abhinavagupta writes

that his remote ancestor, Attrigupta, lived in Autarvedi and migrated to Kashmir at the instance of King Lalitaditya. In the family of Attrigupta was born Varahagupta. His son was Narsimhagupta, known as Chukhala (a devotee of Shiva), and father of Abhinavagupta. His mother's name was Vimla or Vimalkala. Dr. K.C. Pandey states that being born of such spiritually high personages, Abhinavagupta was peculiarly qualified to compose a work containing a summary of all the Agama works on Trika- Shastra. He was a born Yogin, a devotee of Lord Shiva and led a celibate life. Among his great relatives Abhinavagupta makes a special mention of his father's maternal grandfather, Yasoraja, a man of great learning. One significant statement that he makes is that Yasoraja wrote a commentary on Paratrinshika for the benefit of his younger brother Monorathgupta, a Brahmin named Karna, son of Vallabha, a Minister of King Yashaskara of Kashmir, and one Ramadeva, who was proficient in grammar, Tarka and Mimansa.

On the basis of the facts we gather from his works it is believed that Abhinavagupta was probably born about 950 A.D. After having worked indefatigably for more than 40 years, and having fulfilled the great mission for which he was born, the tradition has it that "Abhinavagupta entered the Bhairava cave in village (Bhiruva), along with his 1200 disciples, and thus departed from this world never to be seen again."

Voluminous Writer

In his distinguished book Abhinavagupta, Dr. Pandey writes that Abhinavagupta, being a voluminous writer, has to his credit as many as 41 works. Among his works the most notable are his two famous commentaries on IPK, namely Isvara Pratyabhijnya Vimarsini and Isvara Pratyabhijnya Vivrti Vimarsini, Malini Vijayvartika Parmarthsara, Tantrasara, Tantraloka, Paratrimshika Vivrti, Bhairavastava, Kramastotra, Bodhpanchdashika and Bhagavadgitartha-Sangraha.

Broadly speaking, Abhinavagupta's works fall into four groups. The first group deals with his work on Tantras. The most voluminous work in this group is Tantraloka that enumerates the Tantrik Agamas and dwells upon the Elevated way to freedom and the three methods of realizing the Ultimate Reality, known as Sambhavopaya, Saktopaya and Anovapaya. The other important work belonging to this group is Malini-Vijaya Vivrti which is supposed to have been written by him at Pravarpura in the eastern part of the valley.

The second group consists of his Strotras such as Bhairvastava and Kramastotra as well as a few small treatises like Bodh-Punch Dashika. A third group includes his works on dramaturgy, poetics, aesthetics an the rhetoric. He learnt dramaturgy under the guidance of a great master called Tota and poetics under Induraja. Prof. P.V. Kane maintains that in these two branches of learning, "his two works, i.e. Lochan and Abhinav Bharati are monuments of learning, critical insight, literary grace and style."

The last group constitutes his work on the Pratya bhijnyasastra, the monistic philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism. In this group we have his matchless contributions to this system, the profound and subtle commentaries on IPK.

Great Contribution

A word about Abhinavagupta's great contribution to Pratybhijnya system. Together with Somananda's disciple, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta is the most important representative of the school. He conceived Shiva, the I or Consciousness, and the All as synonymous and multiplicity or objectivity as an expression of the freedom and strength of the 'I' which it affirms and realizes itself precisely as I, consciousness or freedom. This concept of freedom (Swatrantya) is one of the principal achievements of Kashmiri Shaivist thought. As Abhinavagupta in his introduction to IPK holds:

<verses>

Pratyabbijnya, i.e. the recognition of the supreme nature of self. is prescribed in the system for the service of man, as a means of attaining all that is of the highest value. In its essence it unfolds the glorious possibilities and potentialities of man. It upholds the sovereignty of the individual and lays emphasis on recognising (Pratabhijnya) of self (Atman). The profounder faculty is the really Real within us. Man is not merely a speck of dust but an immense force, comprising a comprehensive consciousness and capable of manifesting through his mind and body limitless powers of knowledge and action (Jnana Shakti and Kriya Shakti). This system of thought alone is the most modern of all, inasmuch as it is based on sound rational and scientific principles.

Dr. R.K. Kaw analyses it thus: "It recognises the democratic idea of sovereignty of human individual i.e. superiority and dignity of man, and lays

emphasis on equality and universal brotherhood of mankind, irrespective of diversity of caste, creed, colour and nationality."

Pratyabhijnya has thus shown to mankind a new way (Nava Marga) to human peace and freedom. This is what Abhinavagupta taught us 800 years ago. But for his expositions, this great philosophy of Kashmir could not have been evaluated in its true perspective. In fact, it was he who made this system intelligible, "although his ideas are mostly embedded in a mass of polemics." This encyclopaedic scholar is not only regarded as one of the noblest sons of Kashmir but also one of the most remarkable personalities of medieval India.

Source: http://www.koausa.org/Saints/Abhinavagupta/index.html

TANTRALOKA

The Seminal Exposition of Trika Shaivism

MARK DYCZKOWSKI

I have always felt that what the *Tantrics* were teaching was very much in consonance with what one would aspire to experience in one's own life. Kashmiri Shaivism explains that reality is understood to be just One, and that reality is Lord Shiva. He is the pure conscious nature that manifests as all things. Like a light that shines and illumines everything, the light of consciousness shines, illuminating its own infinite manifestations. This shining of Lord Shiva is eternal, unending, undivided, and in all ways unconditioned. What we live and experience in our daily lives, in every moment, is part of that immense consciousness. He shines, manifests, and is everything and everybody—all that happens in our lives, as well as the means by which we perceive it all.

The essence of the entire teaching of Kashmiri Shaivism is that anything we do for our spiritual development is ultimately to achieve the recognition that there is only that one reality and it is who we are: We *are* that Lord Shiva who is shining and manifesting as all things.

Inspired by this philosophy and by the beauty of the culture, I have immersed myself in Indian studies since I arrived in Delhi in 1969, as a teenager in search of a guru. After spending some time in an *ashram*, I attended Banaras University for my undergraduate and master's work, where I focused on Indian studies, religion, and Sanskrit. Then I went on to Oxford University to earn a Ph.D. and my doctoral dissertation was later published under the title *The Doctrine of Vibration*.

In the beginning of the 1970s, we knew practically nothing about the history of Shaivism. It was largely due to the inspiration of Professor Alexis Sanderson (my mentor at Oxford) that the historical study of Shaivism began. The wealth of knowledge gathered in this field in the past forty years is largely due to his

efforts and those of his students who, like me, have edited and studied unpublished *Tantras*. Of course there are other scholars in this field, but Sanderson really spearheaded a huge effort.

The inspiration and the basis for this historical inquiry are the actual works of Kashmiri Shaivites, the most extensive of which are by Abhinavagupta, who wrote the *Tantraloka*. He was the one who built up what he called "*Anuttara Trika*," and he did that by referring to and integrating many Tantras and other works, drawn from varied Shaiva Tantric traditions. The main manual—you might say the Bible of Anuttara Trika—is the *Tantraloka*, and secondary to that is the *Paratrishikavivarana*. The *Tantraloka* is one of the last great classics in Sanskrit that had not been fully and authoritatively translated into English before now.

History of Shaivism

To fully understand the importance of the *Tantraloka*, I need to say more about the history of Shaivism. Basically what happened is that sometime around the sixth century AD, relatively suddenly, a huge number of revealed texts began to come to the earth, as it were. There were two streams of thought. The first is Siddhanta Shaivism, which is now very popular in South India. It centers on the worship of *lingas* and the form of Shiva called *Sada Shiva*, which means "always Shiva, always auspicious." Nowadays this tradition is found in the large Shiva temples of South India.

The other large current centers around Shiva as Bhairava, the fierce form of Shiva, who has a fierce intention to remove all bondage, to help people to achieve liberation quickly. The Bhairava Tantras developed in a number of different schools right from the beginning. They taught intense, forceful inner yogic practices to achieve liberation, through an expanding state of consciousness full of the energies of Bhairava. The worship of these energies is a very dominant feature—so much so that Bhairava recedes in the background and the Goddesses, who are the main embodiments of these energies, come to the fore.

So part of the Bhairava tradition is *Trika Tantra*. It focuses on the worship of the three Goddesses who represent Shiva's power. Abhinavagupta quotes from many of these Trika Tantras, which had been revealed in the 400-500-year span before his time. Anuttara Trika was considered by him to be the

highest form of Trika. It was a synthesis of all the main aspects of the Trika tradition plus that of the Shaiva Agamas, which include the Siddhanta stream.

The logic of calling Anuttara Trika the "highest" is that according to the revelation itself, Trika comes at the end of a series. One is initiated into Trika Shaivism after having taken a series of initiations into what are considered from the Trika perspective to be lower forms of Shaivism—and even below that Vaishnava Tantra, and finally Vedanta. So there is an ascending gradation of initiation, and Trika contains and encompasses all of them as their ultimate teaching. Everything culminates in Anuttara Trika.

Abhinavagupta presents his *Tantraloka* as an explanation of the teachings of the Malinivijayottara, the Trika Tantra he considers to be the most authoritative. He holds this authority in such reverence that he declares at the beginning of his *Tantraloka* that there is nothing in it which is not in some form present or suggested in the *Malinivijay*. Abhinava thus intends his Anuttara Trika to be understood not as something new, but as the final development of the Trika school of Shaivism— which is one of the oldest of the Bhairava current of Shaivite scriptural traditions— and the most explicit and detailed presentation of its essential teachings.

In terms of my own studies, Abhinavagupta's two great works on Anuttara Trika are full of references to Shaiva Tantras—and it was the need to understand these works that made it necessary for us to discover/uncover as many of these Shaiva Tantras as possible. And it then became evident that we also had to do some historical studies, because Anuttara Trika comes at the end of the development of some centuries of Shaivism. We looked into both the original scriptural sources, the revelation, and at the development of Shaivism as it spread throughout India. To that end, we were inspired to identify those manuscripts that were worth editing because of their historical importance and their content.

Abhinavagupta is one of the very greatest minds India has ever produced. He has contributed works of the highest order in the field of Shaiva Agama, and is among those with the most comprehensive knowledge of its traditions, scriptures, and their philosophical exegesis. The excellence of Abhinavagupta's work, the depth and expanse of meaning of his every word, remains a source of wonder and a constant stimulation of reflection and investigation to all who read him in any field. Moreover, his writing is a

literary masterpiece, as thrillingly beautiful as it is intellectually challenging and deeply spiritual. The *Tantraloka* comprises over 6,700 verses, every one resonant with boundless suggested sense. In the *Tantraloka* we witness one of the world's greatest minds developing a Tantric system with a depth and breadth that has remained unparalleled for a thousand years.

The traditions Abhinavagupta has knit together in his exposition of the teachings of the Anuttara Trika were always transmitted in two parallel ways, written and oral. The text is so long and complex that even the immediate meaning is not always clear, let alone its hidden implicit meaning. It is this implicit meaning that is the focus of the oral transmission—the meaning we can only understand by applying the teachings in practice.

Daily Inspiration with *Tantraloka*

We need not only what comes to us through our thinking, reasoning, and understanding of things, but also the inspiration that comes to us directly from the infinite being who works in our lives. We need to practice in order to open to the grace and love that is available to us from God. Meditative practice is essentially based on paying attention to the existence and presence of Lord Shiva, and the fact that he is everything, within and outside of us. It involves developing and maintaining our awareness of this, at all times. I believe we also need to have some contact with spiritual people who are more highly developed, and, if we are so lucky, with realized souls.

Kashmiri Shaivism teaches that the light of consciousness, which shines as everything, also has a divine power. That power is not only its freedom to shine as all things but also to know itself as that light of consciousness, and as every single individual thing it manifests from within itself. This light of consciousness is essentially Lord Shiva's self-awareness; he knows himself as all things that manifest externally, as all the perceptions through which they are known, and as all the perceivers who know all the things that manifest within consciousness. All practice is therefore centered on developing the recognition of the spiritual self-awareness that is inherent in us as perceivers and as Shiva's agents.

It's not necessary for everyone to study in the way that I have done, but it is necessary to have some understanding of the path and how to develop yourself spiritually. And we all need some inspiration, a way to keep

reminding ourselves of the importance and the value of what we're doing, on whatever path we are on. We need to be reminded that the concerns and worries, as well as the hopes and joys of our daily life, are just a small part of who we really are. So the *Tantraloka*, like the Bible or Koran, is there to give us a source of daily inspiration. It gives us advice on how and why to practice, and some glimmer of what we are ultimately destined to achieve through assiduous practice and, above all, by Lord Shiva's grace.

The development of our spiritual life is like the growth of a river. As we wind our way on a course to the sea of that infinite plentitude, there are tributaries that meet us and make us grow. In my case, I had the great good fortune to receive initiation from Swami Laksmanjoo in 1976. He was a true living master and the last great exponent, at least up until now, within the tradition of Kashmiri Shaivism. Over the years I have done what I could to absorb what he gave me.

But in this tradition, it is taught that the transmission of spiritual consciousness takes place not only through a master but also directly through the teachings of the scriptures and through our own inspiration and insight. Why? Because the one universal teacher of all teachers, Lord Shiva himself, is the source of the teacher's transmission, the scripture's transmission, and of our inspiration. So as we go through and study *Tantraloka,* we can also become recipients of that energy and transmission if we open ourselves up to it.

I believe that a great revival of Kashmiri Shaivism is happening through the acts and initiatives of many people, great and small, all over the world. I find it to be an astonishing revival of a tradition, which, when I began to learn about it forty years ago, was known to barely a dozen people outside Kashmir. What a wonderful opportunity for the average person, who now has the good fortune to have access to these teachings.

I like to see this as part of a process that Lord Shiva himself is initiating and sustaining to reveal himself in the world more concretely, and to revive the teachings of the Kashmiri Shaiva masters that are so profound and extensive. These teachings have always been an inspiration for the great masters of Tantrism who followed Abhinavagupta, as his words have been the means through which the masters have understood their own tradition. I hope that in

the coming years, I will be able to bring the profound beauty and wisdon of *Tantraloka* and Kashmiri Shaivism to more and more people.